

Beyond Experience – Educating Coast Guard Officers for the Demands of Professional Excellence

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Abstract

BEYOND EXPERIENCE: EDUCATING COAST GUARD OFFICERS FOR THE DEMANDS OF PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE by Commander Virginia J. Kammer, USCG, 59 pages.

This monograph examines the current state of Coast Guard Professional Military Education (PME) to identify areas for improvement to ensure Coast Guard officers have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate in an increasingly complex and dynamic post-9-11 environment. First, the monograph explores the history and culture of the service, including internal and external factors, to show their influence on the service's preference for the experiential model of learning and education. Then the monograph examines current policies, requirements, and institutional issues, including service, joint, and departmental competencies. This section also includes a holistic review and summary of several recent Coast Guard studies on core competency gaps in junior and mid-grade officers. The first section of the monograph concludes with defining the "desired state" of Coast Guard officer competencies in context with current strategic policy and vision on professional development.

The monograph then analyzes information presented in the first section using *Systems* and *Obstruction Analysis* techniques described in Jamshid Gharajedaghi's book *Systems Thinking*. *Systems Analysis* is used to indicate the structural, functional, and procedural issues in the Coast Guard's training and education system that may be preventing change towards the "desired state." *Obstruction Analysis* is used to identify the social and behavioral impediments within and external to the Coast Guard that may be hindering change. The analyses show the complexity and inter-relatedness of the issues that continue to allow competency gaps at the mid-grade levels and to prevent improvements to the officer PME system. Five solution areas are discerned from the dual analyses: knowledge, advocacy, plans and policy, resources, and culture.

The monograph concludes with proposed solutions in all five areas. The monograph recommends multiple systemic changes which, if implemented simultaneously, would close existing core competency gaps in the officer corps and improve service, joint, and interagency professional competence at all levels. The proposed changes would also gradually move the Coast Guard away from an experiential-based PME system which is not meeting the professional development needs of the officer corps towards an objective-based system which would.

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It is impossible for anyone to begin to learn what he thinks that he already knows.
--Epictetus

Introduction

The United States Coast Guard has always used and continues to use an experiential model of training and education for its officer corps, relying heavily on job-specific, short-duration courses or on-the-job training for developing professional competencies and leadership. Resident, advanced educational opportunities are offered on a limited basis to fill specific program requirements, but they are not part of a service-wide Professional Military Education (PME) program that is aligned with the Coast Guard's strategic goals, recent organizational changes, or the Department of Defense (DOD) services' PME or Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) programs. Several recent studies undertaken by the Coast Guard indicate there are significant competency gaps in junior and mid-grade officers in multiple areas.¹ For instance, the 2007 and 2008 *Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis Reports* indicated significant gaps in strategic thinking, vision development, conflict management, political savvy, external awareness, and effective communication all of which are important competencies in mid-grade and senior-level leaders.²

To compound the issue, demand on the Coast Guard to lead larger and more complex operations has increased significantly since September 11, 2001 (9-11). The Coast Guard's

¹The studies reviewed include the following: U.S. Coast Guard, *United States Coast Guard Junior Officer Needs Assessment Final Report* (JONA) (Washington, DC, 20 August 1999); U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Report on Coast Guard and Homeland Security Professional Education and Training* (HS-PROFET) (Washington, DC, 12 September 2006); U.S. Coast Guard, *Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis Report Phase 1* (MOLGA 1) (Washington, DC, 27 December 2007); and, U.S. Coast Guard, *Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis Report Phase 2* (MOLGA 2) (Washington, DC, 17 September 2008).

² U.S. Coast Guard, *Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis Report Phase 1* (MOLGA 1) (Washington, DC, 27 December 2007); and, U.S. Coast Guard, *Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis Report Phase 2* (MOLGA 2) (Washington, DC, 17 September 2008).

leadership roles in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Hurricane Ike in 2008, the Haiti Earthquake and Deepwater Horizon incident in 2010 may indicate new and expanded competencies required by its mid-grade and senior-level officers.³ These large-scale, complex contingencies require operational and strategic-level thinking and action both as a military service and as an interagency entity; however, the knowledge, skills, and abilities to think and act at the operational and strategic levels are not part of the current training and education program within the service. The Coast Guard's over reliance on an experiential model of education and the subsequent competency gaps it has produced is due to many reasons, and in order to recommend solutions it is necessary to understand the complexity and interrelatedness of the issues. Only then, can the real problem or problems be identified and appropriate solutions be proposed and implemented to close the competency gaps.

This paper examines the current state of the Coast Guard's PME program, specifically its educational component, reviews the studies completed to date, and recommends potential solutions for improving the PME program. The methodology used in this paper is not based on Human Performance Technology principles used in the Coast Guard studies, nor is this paper meant to be a critical, systematic analysis of the previous studies.⁴ Rather, the paper attempts to examine the issues from a broader, conceptual perspective using general design principles.⁵ The

³ One of the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina was that the Department of Homeland Security needed a professional development and education program that would educate homeland security personnel from all levels of government to enable an integrated federal, state, local interagency team. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned*, (Washington, DC, 2006), 119.

⁴ Human Performance Technology is a methodology that "seeks to provide an engineering approach to attaining desired accomplishments from human performers by determining gaps in performance and designing cost-effective and efficient interventions," International Society for Performance Improvement, "Human Performance Technology (HPT) Primer," <http://www.afc-ispi.org/repository/hptprimer.html> (accessed December 27, 2010).

⁵ The design concepts and practices used in this study come from multiple sources that serve as the primary texts in the design module the author experienced as a Senior Service School student at the Army's School of

paper is organized into three sections. The first section describes background issues relevant to the officer corps as a whole and individually, including the internal and external actors and influences that affect officer professional development. In essence it is “a narrative description that captures the history, culture, current state, and future goals of relevant actors [and issues] in the operational environment.”⁶ This section also includes defining the desired end state, including closing the specific competency gaps and identifying other competencies that may be required in the current operating environment. The second section of the paper, builds on the first in that it is a “refinement of the [environment] that defines...the areas for action that will transform existing conditions towards the desired end state.”⁷ This section identifies the problems and challenges as well as the interactions and relationships that exist that may underlie or hinder improvements.⁸ The final section of the paper, builds on the first two sections, and examines potential solutions and opportunities for making systemic improvements. This includes comparative and analytical analysis of alternatives.

Advanced Military Studies - Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Primary sources include Bryan Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, Inc., 2006); Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking, Managing Chaos and Complexity: A Platform for Designing Business Architecture* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, Inc., 2006); Donald Schoen, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).

⁶ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of the Army. *Field Manual 5-0: The Operations Process* (Washington, DC, March 2010): 3-9.

⁷ *FM 5-0*, 3-10.

⁸ *FM 5-0*, 3-10.

Background

A Reflection on the History and Culture of the Officer Corps

The Coast Guard, the smallest of the five military services, has eleven statutory missions and is comprised of approximately 42,000 active duty members of which 6,612 are officers.⁹¹⁰ All officers are considered available to serve in any or all mission areas as the needs of the service dictate; however, officer specialties, or career paths, do not align by mission type. For instance, a helicopter pilot may be conducting a search and rescue mission on the same duty day he executes a migrant or drug interdiction mission. The same helicopter pilot may be dual qualified in a fixed-wing aircraft or transition through several aircraft in a career. Afloat officers also typically serve aboard multiple types of cutters in a career conducting most, but not usually all, missions in a career. Requiring officers to be competent in multiple missions and platforms presents significant training, education, and specialty management issues for the service. In 2006 after conducting a specialty review, the Coast Guard redefined its officer specialties into thirteen categories from seventy existing areas of expertise in which there were enough billets to sustain “a viable population of officers.”¹¹ Even with thirteen specialties, some are so broad they require

⁹ The officer corps is comprised of 42 flag officers, 354 captains, 823 commanders, 1,353 lieutenant commanders, 2,388 lieutenants, 1,243 lieutenants junior grade, and 409 ensigns. Thomas Olenchock (CG-12A), e-mail message to author, January 4, 2011.

¹⁰ The Coast Guard has six Non-Homeland Security Missions: marine safety, search and rescue, aids to navigation, living marine resources, marine environmental protection, and ice operations. It has five Homeland Security Missions: ports, waterways and coastal security; drug interdiction; migrant interdiction; defense readiness; and, other law enforcement. *The Homeland Security Act of 2002*, Public Law 107-296, *U. S. Statutes at Large* 116 (2002): 115, codified at U.S. Code 6 (2002), § 468.

¹¹ The current thirteen specialties are aviation; afloat; operations ashore-response; operations ashore-prevention; intelligence; command, control, communications, computer and information technology; engineering; finance; human resources; legal; management; medical; and, reserve programs. U.S. Coast Guard, “Officer Specialty Management System” under “Officer Management,” <http://www.uscg.mil/opm/opm3/opm-3OSMS.asp> (accessed September 1, 2010).

further division into sub-specialties, thirty-eight for the total workforce.¹² The realignment of specialties was largely driven by the assignment process and ability to match skill sets to current organizational structures and mission execution rather than to refine or establish educational requirements for each specialty. As Coast Guard policy states, “the fact that positions have certain competencies assigned to them does not establish unit funding or training requirements, other than those identified in the *Cutter and Training Qualification Manual* for the afloat specialty.”¹³ There is no consolidated ownership of the specialties or consistency across specialties for defining their training and education requirements.

Fifty years ago, officers were “generalists” who rotated from afloat and aviation billets to fill support, resources, and policy billets in alternating cycles. Specialization of the officer corps began to steadily increase from the 1970s, for multiple reasons, including the expansion of some existing missions, the addition of new missions, the increasing technological aspects of equipment, and the decrease of afloat assets and seagoing billets.¹⁴ The trend towards specialization is likely to continue in the future since technological demands of assets and infrastructure keep rising, billets afloat continue to decrease, and public demand for Coast Guard expertise and presence during major incidents since 9-11 is increasing. This trend has significant implications for Coast Guard training and education but is not the only issue to consider. The

¹² U.S. Coast Guard, “Officer Specialty Management System” under “Officer Management,” <http://www.uscg.mil/opm/opm3/opm-3OSMS.asp> (accessed September 1, 2010).

¹³ This manual redefines Coast Guard competencies into a common architecture and into human resource databases for assignment and management of the workforce. Program managers are responsible for defining training and education requirements for their respective competencies. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. U.S. Coast Guard, *U.S. Coast Guard Competency Management System Manual (COMDTINST M 5300.2)*, (Washington, DC, 25 October 2005): 2-7.

¹⁴ U.S. Coast Guard, *Developing a Career*, 7.

nature of the service's culture is also changing and should be considered relevant to changes in officer training and education.

The Coast Guard's culture is rooted in and affected by its multi-mission nature, its diverse organizational origins, and its ever-changing departmental oversight. The Coast Guard is the oldest, continuous seagoing service, founded in 1790 as the Revenue Marine and renamed several years later as the Revenue Cutter Service. The current Coast Guard was formed in 1915 from a merging of the military Revenue Cutter Service and the civilian, shore-based Life-Saving Service. Then in 1939, the civilian Lighthouse Service was transferred to the Coast Guard, and in 1946 the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation was also transferred to the Coast Guard from the Department of Labor and Commerce.¹⁵ As the Coast Guard increased its missions after World War II and grew in size from approximately 30,000 active duty personnel in 1950 to 42,000 in 2010, the service's character began to change from being a military seagoing service to a maritime one with greater shore-based regulatory missions. While some advocate for a return to the service's seagoing roots to maintain the service's character, the reality is this is not likely to happen with fewer afloat billets and a revised set of missions that is strongly embraced by the government and the public.¹⁶ Barring some cataclysmic event that returns the service to its World War II strength of 198,500 personnel, of which fifty percent were at sea, the Coast Guard is not likely to regain its legacy identity.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation was also a merged entity from the Steamboat Inspection Service and the Bureau of Navigation. U.S. Coast Guard, "When Was the Coast Guard Established?" under "History," <http://www.uscg.mil/history/faqs/when.asp> (accessed December 10, 2010).

¹⁶ William R. Wells, II, "The Coast Guard: Culturally Overboard?," under "Coast Guard Culture," <http://www.aug.edu/libwrw/articles/overboard.pdf> (accessed December 23, 2010), 3-5.

¹⁷ Wells, 6.

Thus, despite being an “old” service, the Coast Guard is relatively new as a merged force; it is a conglomeration of entities with original and inherited missions, and civilian and military heritages. Nevertheless, the core of the Coast Guard’s identity has been its seagoing focus, largely due to the influence of the Coast Guard Academy, the source of the majority of commissioned officers. The Academy was and still is the primary accession source for officers. Until recently, all graduates were assigned to a cutter for their first tour after graduation; the common academy experience combined with tours at sea kept the officer corps culturally focused and insular. Officers from other accession sources, direct commission programs and Officer Candidate School, were and are a minority population but contribute a diverse source of intellect and culture to the officer corps. The majority of these officers are not assigned to seagoing billets but fill staff or shore-based assignments based on the needs of the service. The long-term result of differential first tour assignments is that the officer corps culture is not unified but culturally stratified by accession source and career experience. The training and education system reinforces the separate cultures since there was and is no service-wide primary or intermediate PME courses for officers. Junior officers were and are trained on-the-job or by position or function-specific training courses which afford them unequal and inconsistent opportunity to acquire the non-technical professional competencies such as strategic thinking, vision development, and external awareness.

In addition to the influence of legacy institutions and missions on the Coast Guard, its history and culture are also impacted by its transitory departmental history. Originally, the Revenue Cutter Service and the Life-Saving Service were part of the Treasury Department. In 1917 and in 1941, the Coast Guard was transferred to the Department of the Navy; subsequently, the Coast Guard was transferred back to Treasury after each world war. In 1967, the Coast Guard

was transferred to the Department of Transportation where it resided until March of 2003 when the Department of Homeland Security was established in response to the 9-11 attacks.¹⁸ Its changing location in the government has changed the service's focus repeatedly and hindered the development and sustainment of a PME program because it requires consistent external advocacy and resources.¹⁹ In contrast, the DOD services have not only had a steadier mission focus throughout their histories, but also steadier and more consistent departmental oversight. Fewer major external disruptions combined with continued Congressional support for PME enabled the DOD services to establish world-class PME institutions and faculties.

The brief reflection provided here on the historical, cultural, and political influences on the Coast Guard officer corps provides the context for the next section that describes the current state of PME in the Coast Guard using the standard established by the DOD for the armed forces. This includes a review of policies and requirements, competency gaps, recent findings, and relevant actors.

Current State of Professional Military Education in the Coast Guard

The DOD defines PME for the armed forces as one component of officer professional development “that comprises training, experience, education, and self-improvement. PME provides the education needed to complement training, experience, and self-improvement to produce the most professionally competent, strategic-minded, critical thinking individual

¹⁸ U.S. Coast Guard, “Historical Timeline” under “Organization,” <http://www.uscg.mil/history/OrganizationIndex.asp> (accessed December 10, 2010).

¹⁹ Anne Laurent, “The Curse of Can-Do,” *Government Executive* (March 1, 2000), under “Coast Guard Culture,” <http://www.govexe.com/gpp/0300cg.htm> (accessed December 23, 2010), 5.

possible.”²⁰ PME also “provides individuals with skills, knowledge, understanding, and appreciation that enable [officers] to make sound decisions in progressively more demanding command and staff positions within the national security environment.”²¹ The scope of this paper is primarily limited to the education component, versus training, experience, or self-improvement, of professional development, although “training and education are not mutually exclusive” since most military schools “include elements of both training and education in their academic programs.”²² To differentiate more clearly between the two, the following description is provided in DOD’s instruction on *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (OPMEP):

In its broadest conception, education conveys general bodies of knowledge and develops habits of mind applicable to a broad spectrum of endeavors. As viewed through the prism of “Learning Domains”, education is largely defined through the cognitive domain and fosters breadth of view, diverse perspectives, critical analysis, abstract reasoning, comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty, and innovative thinking, particularly with respect to complex non-linear problems. This contrasts with training, which focuses largely through the psychomotor domain on the instruction of personnel to enhance their capacity to perform specific functions and tasks.²³

The OPMEP delineates five PME levels for service and joint education: precommissioning, primary (O-1 through O-3), intermediate (O-4), senior (O-5 and O-6), and general/flag officer.²⁴ PME, in the broadest and most complete sense, is comprised of both service and joint requirements, with Joint PME (JPME) being a subset of PME.²⁵ JPME for mid-grade through senior-level officers is comprised of three phases: Phase 1 is considered intermediate-level joint

²⁰ U.S. Department of Defense. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI 1800.01D): Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP). (Washington, DC, 15 July 2009), A-A-1.

²¹ David E. Muhleman, “The ABCs of JPME,” *Joint Force Quarterly* (Spring 1994), 109.

²² OPMEP, A-2.

²³ OPMEP, A-2.

²⁴ House Committee on Armed Services, *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*. 111th Cong., 1st sess., 2010, A-A-2.

²⁵ OPMEP, A-A-2.

education focused on mid-grade officers; Phase 2 is focused on senior-level officers in grades O-5 and O-6; and, Capstone is for general/flag officers. Completion of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 is required for achieving designation as a Joint Specialty Officer. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is responsible for implementing and overseeing the Program of Joint Education for the armed forces, and DOD services use these levels and phases for planning and implementing their service-specific and JPME programs.²⁶

Even though the Coast Guard is a military service, current officer education does not follow or use the five general levels of education delineated in DOD policy. There are no Coast Guard-specific professional development courses for officers at the primary, intermediate, or senior levels and service PME requirements for each level are not defined. Professional development focuses on technical training to meet individual program needs, and the Coast Guard relies on self-education, unit-level training and mentoring for developing leadership in its officers rather than formal or prescribed courses. The Coast Guard is aware of DOD's PME continuum and values sending a few selected officers to DOD PME institutions to ensure some joint competency; however, there is no service goal of what the level of joint competency should be within the officer corps. The lack of service-specific education and PME program goals is due to many reasons which will be examined further in the next section of the paper.

Policies and “Requirements”

This section examines Congressional, departmental, and service policies and requirements for PME that directly or indirectly impact the Coast Guard. Unlike the DOD services, Coast Guard policy for officer development and education is not required by

²⁶ OPMEP, A-A-A-1.

departmental or Congressional mandate; however, Title 10 requirements and DOD policies do have a tangential impact on Coast Guard officer development. The *Report of the Panel on Military Education of the Committee on Armed Services*, also known as the *Skelton Report*, published in 1989, reviewed PME and JPME requirements for DOD services that were made mandatory under the *Goldwater-Nichols Act* of 1986.²⁷ The only mention of the Coast Guard in the *Skelton Report* is that the panel “assumes Coast Guard...officers will continue to participate in PME schooling as in the past. It believes these officers are an important part of our “total force” and must have opportunities for PME.”²⁸

As of September 2009 under a revision of Title 10 requirements, Coast Guard officers as “an officer of the armed forces” will not be accepted into a JPME Phase II program without completing JPME Phase I; however, there is no requirement for Coast Guard officers to complete JPME Phase I because this is a DOD-only requirement.²⁹ While this does not seem logical, the impact of this new requirement could limit Coast Guard access to DOD senior service schools which could further widen the core professional and joint competency gaps that exist in its officers.³⁰ In 2010, the Congress published another review of the status of DOD’s system of in-residence PME that uses “armed services” terminology extensively but specifically excludes the Coast Guard in the scope of the study.³¹ In addition to the tangential impact from

²⁷ House Committee on Armed Services. *Report of the Panel on Military Education*, (Skelton Report), 101st Cong., 1st sess., April 1989.

²⁸ Skelton Report, 17.

²⁹ LCDR Erica Mohr. Issue Paper on *Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)* for the Coast Guard Office of Strategic Analysis (CG-0951), 4 November 2010, 1-2.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ House Committee on Armed Services, Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel. 111th Cong., 1st sess., 2010, vii & 4.

and somewhat confusing relationship with DOD policy and requirements, the Coast Guard is also influenced by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which oversees the Coast Guard.

In 2007, DHS chartered a study which identified homeland security core competencies “needed by the DHS career professional workforce serving in first-level supervisory through executive positions.”³² These competencies were banded into three tiers. Tier 1 competencies represent the fundamental knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of all DHS professionals serving as managers and supervisors.³³ Tier 2 competencies represent the DHS-specific KSAs and Tier 3 competencies represent “other homeland security competencies” that DHS professionals should have to “support the Department’s mission.”³⁴ Since most, if not all, Coast Guard officers hold first-level supervisory or higher positions, these three levels of competencies, in theory, apply to the entire officer corps. These competencies represent an additional significant body of information Coast Guard officers need to learn in addition to service, military and joint competencies. While currently not required by policy, the DHS competencies represent the current reality of working within the interagency. It is interesting to note that in September 2006 the Coast Guard published its own study on Homeland Security Professional Education and Training (HS-PROFET) as an outcome of its experiences in responding to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The study recommended a “core content” curriculum

³² This study was likely conducted as a result of the recommendation made in the report on *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned* which was published in February 2006. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Directorate for Preparedness, Chief Learning Officer. *The Department of Homeland Security Professional Core Competencies*. Kim Corthell, Task Lead. White paper prepared by the Homeland Security Institute. (Washington, DC, 2007): 1, 15-16.

³³ Ibid., 1 & 7.

³⁴ Ibid., 6-7.

and professional competencies for Coast Guard officers to have as part of DHS. The study identified 146 competencies grouped into six conceptual groups.³⁵ This study is examined in more detail in the next section. Until such time that there is a departmental PME requirement, the Coast Guard continues to use its own policy and guidelines for workforce professional development.

Almost all Coast Guard policy documents that address professional development apply to the entire force; there are few, if any, instructions that apply only to officers. There is a stand-alone Coast Guard policy for enlisted PME, but there is no stand-alone document for officer PME.³⁶ Two on-line documents provide guidance on officer career development. One was published in 1998 and gives broad guidance on leadership, career paths, assignments, professional development, evaluations, promotions, and leaving the service.³⁷ The second one was posted in 2007 on the Officer Personnel Management website, is eleven pages long, and broadly addresses specialties and career path milestones.³⁸ Additional policy specific to officer development and PME is covered within existing service instructions that focus on leadership development for the entire service.³⁹ Of these, *Commandant Instruction M5351.3, Leadership*

³⁵ The six groups identified by the authors of the study included “The Big Picture, Federalism 303, Forwardness, Integrity, Expertness, Interaction, Asset Management, and Deciding.” HS-PROFET, 24-26.

³⁶ U.S. Coast Guard, Enlisted Professional Military Education (E-PME) Manual (COMDTINST 1510.2). 14 October 2004. (Washington, DC).

³⁷ U.S. Coast Guard, *The Coast Guard Officer Career Development Guidebook*, <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/doc/OCareerDevGuidebook.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2010).

³⁸ U.S. Coast Guard, *Developing a Career as a Coast Guard Officer*, 2007, <http://www.uscg.mil/hr/cgpc/opm/> (accessed September 22, 2010).

³⁹ Relevant instructions reviewed include the following: Commandant Instruction M5300.2 (U.S. Coast Guard Competency Management System Manual), Commandant Instruction 5351.1 (Coast Guard Leadership Development Program), Commandant Instruction M5351.3 (Leadership Development Framework), Commandant Instruction 5351.5 (Unit Leadership Development Program (ULDP)), Commandant Instruction 5357.1A (Coast Guard Individual Development Plan (IDP)), and Commandant Instruction M1500.10C (Training and Education Manual), under “CG Directives,” http://www.uscg.mil/directives/about_cgds.asp (accessed December 8, 2010).

Development Framework, delineates twenty-eight leadership competencies by performance level and recommends activities for members to use to meet them. The leadership competencies are delineated in Table 1 on page 22 and will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of the paper. The studies the Coast Guard has conducted focused on these leadership competencies and did not focus on other KSAs, learning objectives or performance standards. It is worth noting that the Coast Guard does not have an instruction or program similar to DOD's OPMEP that describes or delineates officer levels of learning for cognitive and affective domains based on a taxonomy of educational objectives – the knowledge and attitudes needed at each grade for professional progression.⁴⁰

Individual officers are responsible for seeking experience, training, or education for each competency, such as on-line resources, seminars, or participation in the Unit Leadership Development Program (ULDP) implemented in July 2008 as a unit-level requirement. Training opportunities for technical or specialty proficiency are plentiful with more than 600 short-term courses offered across all specialties, officer and enlisted.⁴¹ Training opportunities for the remaining 27 non-technical competencies for officers are limited. The Training Quota Management Center course listing indicates several one or two week seminars predominantly at the O-4 thru O-6 level that cover the “leading performance and change” and “leading the service” competencies some of which are sponsored by other government agencies so seats are limited. There are currently two, two-week course offerings, a *Leadership Development Seminar*

⁴⁰ OPMEP, E-A-1 thru E-C-4. DOD uses Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives as the basis for determining the cognitive and affective learning objectives in OPMEP for JPME levels which is an established professional standard. Benjamin Bloom, ed., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Book 1 Cognitive Domain* (New York: Longman, 1956).

⁴¹ Erica Mohr, Office of Strategic Analysis (CG-0951), e-mail message to author provided from <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/tqc/>, December 9, 2010.

and a *Supervisory Leadership Seminar* which focus on many of the core competencies. These courses target the O-2 to O-4 level; however, attendance is not mandatory and sessions are limited to several small groups each year. In addition to short-term training courses, the Coast Guard has an advanced education program for courses greater than twenty weeks that is designed to raise individual professionalism and technical competence in specific areas.⁴²

Advanced education quotas are managed and sponsored by approximately thirty program offices that require a specific degree for program management or support. Officers, typically O-2 and higher, compete for quotas based on their interest and are selected by advanced education panels. Once the officer completes the degree, he or she typically serves in a billet required by the sponsoring program for at least one full tour. In 2010, approximately 235 opportunities were offered for officers in a wide range of topic areas, the vast majority of which were in highly technical fields such as engineering, financial management, and information technology.⁴³ The advanced degree opportunities for junior (O-1/O-2) and mid-grade (O3/O4) officers, with the exception of the Leadership Studies Program and DOD's Command and General Staff Colleges, largely do not address any of the twenty-eight leadership competencies other than technical. Currently, there is no service requirement for an officer to have an advanced degree or JPME Phase 1 or 2 for promotion to senior rank.

⁴² U.S. Coast Guard, *Coast Guard Advanced Education Program (COMDTINST 1524.1)*. 23 May 1997. http://www.uscg.mil/directives/about_cgds.asp (accessed December 8, 2010).

⁴³ In 2010, of the 235 opportunities, approximately 156 quotas were for technical degrees, eighteen were for Senior Service Schools or Fellowships at the O-5 and O-6 level, eight were for DOD Command and General Staff colleges at the O-4 level, and the remaining quotas were for non-technical program management, leadership studies or academy instructor functions. Mid-grade officers also have access to the Naval War College Fleet Seminar program which meets JPME Phase 1 requirements if there is one near their duty station as well as on-line DOD JPME courses. These programs are free but are time intensive. In addition to these non-resident programs, officers are encouraged to pursue life-long-learning opportunities including graduate degrees on their own by using the tuition assistance program. U.S. Coast Guard, "Coast Guard Advanced Education Program Allocations FY 2010" (ALCOAST 143/10).

In summary, DOD, DHS and Coast Guard policies and requirements for training and educating its officers as military and interagency professionals are either not clearly mandated, not well defined, or both. It is difficult to ascertain the degree to which the diverse and diffuse PME policy and requirements of the various entities affect actual competency gaps, but it is likely there is some causal link. The next section of the paper reviews the documented competency gaps in mid-grade officers identified in multiple Coast Guard studies.

Recent Studies and Competency Gaps

The Junior Officer Needs Assessment (JONA) was conducted in 1997 and 1998 to identify the basic leadership traits of junior officers from all accession sources during their first tour. The study was not undertaken due to real or perceived performance deficiencies but as a broader service-wide review conducted following a Workforce Cultural Audit that revealed a need “for the Coast Guard to provide improved leadership skills for all segments of the workforce.”⁴⁴ The study used Human Performance Technology methodology to contrast the actual state to the ideal state in abilities, attitudes, skills, and knowledge. Then the root causes of the deficiencies were identified and solutions proposed.⁴⁵ In all, twenty seven attitudinal gaps were found in junior officers within twelve to twenty-four months of commissioning; however, none of the gaps were severe.⁴⁶ JONA attitudinal gaps are denoted with the letter “J” in Table 1 on page 22. Solutions to address the deficiencies were varied but focused on accession source

⁴⁴ U.S. Coast Guard, *Junior Officer Needs Assessment Final Report* (JONA) dated 20 August 1999 (Washington, DC), 1.

⁴⁵ Human Performance Technology is a methodology that “seeks to provide an engineering approach to attaining desired accomplishments from human performers by determining gaps in performance and designing cost-effective and efficient interventions,” International Society for Performance Improvement, “Human Performance Technology (HPT) Primer,” <http://www.afc-ispi.org/repository/hptprimer.html> (accessed December 27, 2010).

⁴⁶ JONA, 1.

training, evaluations and unit-level development and mentoring programs. Several of the recommendations indicated that supervisor training in mentoring, leadership, performance counseling, and feedback were needed to provide junior officers better role models.⁴⁷ Most of the recommendations were not implemented and the gaps identified in the JONA report reappeared in more leadership categories and in greater depth in 2007 and 2008 when the Coast Guard conducted a comprehensive review of mid-grade officer leadership competencies in the Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis studies (MOLGA 1 and MOLGA 2).

The Office of Leadership and Development (CG-133) and the Commandant's Leadership Advisory Council initiated a study to verify anecdotal input from the field that competency gaps existed in mid-grade officers. The MOLGA 1 study focused on the twenty-eight leadership competencies of the leadership development framework previously mentioned and was intended to "help address the question – In today's dynamic Coast Guard, does the transition to O-4 need to be facilitated by formal training or is the experiential model enough?"⁴⁸ The study was conducted using the Human Performance Technology methodology to contrast the actual state to the ideal state within each of the twenty-eight competencies. Significant competency gaps were found in the human resource management, political savvy, strategic thinking, external awareness, customer focus, and vision development and implementation competencies.⁴⁹ The gaps are denoted with the letter "M" in Table 1 on page 22. Of particular note is the finding "that 68 percent of those surveyed do not think that the Coast Guard's leadership development system provides adequate support, and only 3percent think that there are no leadership gaps in the mid-

⁴⁷ JONA, 2-14 and Part II.

⁴⁸ U.S. Coast Guard, *Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis Report Phase 1* (MOLGA 1) dated 27 December 2007 (Washington, DC), 3.

⁴⁹ MOLGA 1, 10.

grade officer ranks. The MOLGA 1 study also included examination of the potential barriers to leadership development. The work group classified the barriers into six broad categories: lack of policy/doctrine, not enough time, organization culture, lack of tools/resources, lack of skill/knowledge, lack of understanding of skill/attribute.”⁵⁰ The MOLGA 1 study also identified the critical competencies that mid-grade officers need most on a major incident; these are denoted with the letter “I” in Table 1, on page 22.

The MOLGA 2 study assessed the root causes of the four largest competency gaps found in the MOLGA 1 study and proposed “solutions to remove the barriers and close the performance gaps.”⁵¹ MOLGA 2 classified the root causes into several types including skills and knowledge, process, organizational culture, and expectation/feedback. The study concluded that “the lack of resources, unclear expectations, absence of a well-defined performance management system (including a relevant feedback/evaluation system), lack of time, and unclear process/procedures result in a knowledge skill gap for Mid-Grade Officers.”⁵² The study’s recommended solution to the gaps included that CG-133 create a “unified and distinguishable” leadership development continuum and that O-2s and O-3s attend a basic officer leadership course that would specifically address the twenty-eight leadership competencies.⁵³ The MOLGA 2 study also proposed an alternate or stopgap solution by reemphasizing the Unit Leadership Development Program (ULDP); however, this solution did not address or close all of the gaps identified or overcome some of the barriers identified in the study.

⁵⁰ MOLGA 1, 13.

⁵¹ U.S. Coast Guard, *Mid-Grade Officer Leadership Gap Analysis Report Phase 2* (MOLGA 2) dated 17 September 2008 (Washington, DC), cover page.

⁵² MOLGA 2, 9.

⁵³ MOLGA 2, 11.

The final comment of the MOLGA 2 study stated, “the findings in this report indicate an ongoing systemic problem that requires change to the organizational culture...[Coast Guard leadership] should work together to develop a leadership continuum that combines the current initiatives and implements training beyond the current experiential model.”⁵⁴ The results of the MOLGA studies were communicated to senior leadership and to the entire Coast Guard via message traffic, but the recommendations were never created or implemented for program improvement.⁵⁵

The final study reviewed here, the *Homeland Security Professional Education and Training Report* (HS-PROFET) was conducted in 2006 by the Coast Guard prior to the MOLGA studies just following the service’s unprecedented response to Hurricane Katrina. It was undertaken to study “the current state of homeland security professional education and development” of its entire workforce; however, it emphasized officer corps requirements most heavily. The Coast Guard saw the project as a “rare opportunity to bring about needed change within the service’s professional development system...and to be a more agile organization that is better prepared to meet the challenges associated with meeting its missions in the post-911/Hurricane Katrina environment.”⁵⁶ The study was conducted by multiple subject matter expert groups which conducted independent research and then met in plenary sessions to collate, summarize, and distill the data and qualitative information collected.⁵⁷ The study reviewed the

⁵⁴ MOLGA 2, 15.

⁵⁵ This comment is based on several conversations the author had with CG-1 personnel in addition to reviewing the programs and requirements currently in place.

⁵⁶ HS-PROFET, 1.

⁵⁷ Unlike the JONA and MOLGA studies, the HS-PROFET study did not use Human Performance Technology methodology but relied heavily on the experience of the panels of subject matter experts. HS-PROFET, 2.

current state of Homeland Security Professional Development, summarized general and specific competency gaps and made short-term and long-term recommendations for improvement. The competency gaps focused on accession, O3/O4, O5/O6, Flag Officer/SES, and Senior Enlisted levels. The study identified significant internal cultural, organizational, and process issues. The study also revealed that officer professional education is not based on a strategic learning plan; there is no single custodian within the Coast Guard for professional development; there are gaps in professional development data; there is no defined sequence of training and experience for senior leaders to assume strategic-level DHS positions, such as Principal Federal Official; there are no incentives to encourage a genuine culture of life-long learning; and, there is no alignment with DHS or DOD learning initiatives.⁵⁸ The specific competency gaps identified by level, while too lengthy to list here, echo the findings of the MOLGA studies for mid-grade officers and identify additional ones for senior and flag-level officers and civilians.⁵⁹ A brief synthesis of the overlap between the HS-PROFET competencies and the Coast Guard's twenty-eight leadership competencies reveals an overlap of twenty-five of twenty-eight competencies.⁶⁰ The twenty-five are denoted by the letter "H" in Table 1 on page 22.

The HS-PROFET study made substantial short-term and long-term recommendations for addressing program and competency shortfalls, including policy changes, developing a fundamentals course for mid-grade staff officers, and creating a Coast Guard Command and General Staff College.⁶¹ Based on a recent interview with one of the subgroup participants, none

⁵⁸ HS-PROFET, 9-10.

⁵⁹ HS-PROFET, 10-11.

⁶⁰ JONA, 11; MOLGA, 17; HS-PROFET, 24-26.

⁶¹ HS-PROFET, 11-14.

of the short-term or long-term recommendations were ever fully implemented.⁶² The HS-PROFET study is important because it not only addresses the gaps in policy and competencies, but it also identifies internal institutional barriers that the MOLGA studies did not address directly. The next section of the paper discusses some of the internal and external institutional issues that potentially impede the development of a Coast Guard PME program.

Leading Self	Leading Others	Leading Performance and Change	Leading the Service
Accountability & Responsibility(J/H)	Effective Communications(I/H)	Conflict Management(H)	Financial Management(H)
Aligning Values(J/H)	Team Building(I/H)	Customer Focus(M/H)	Technology Management(H)
Followership(J)	Influencing Others(I/H)	Decision Making & Problem Solving(I/H)	Human Resource Management(M/H)
Health & Well Being	Mentoring(H)	Management & Process Improvement(H)	External Awareness(M/H)
Self-Awareness & Learning(H)	Respect for Others & Diversity (J/H)	Vision Development & Implementation(M/H)	Political Savvy(M/H)
Personal Conduct(J/H)	Taking Care of People(J/H)	Creativity & Innovation(I/H)	Partnering(I/H)
Technical Proficiency(I)			Entrepreneurship
			Stewardship(H)
			Strategic Thinking(M/H)

Table 1: Coast Guard Leadership Competencies

Institutional Issues

As the 2006 HS-PROFET study pointed out, “there does not appear to be a single custodian or plan for [officer development]. Responsibility...where it exists, is spread over many

⁶² Malcolm Williams, participant in the HS-PROFET study, e-mail message to author on specific HS-PROFET questions, September 29, 2010.

staffs with no overarching theoretical or objective framework.”⁶³ As of early 2011, there is still no one entity within the Coast Guard that is responsible for developing education policy or delivering training and education to the officer corps. It is difficult to ascertain from preliminary investigation the precise roles and responsibilities of these entities, or how they develop and implement policy, training, and education for the officer corps.⁶⁴ While the ownership of some functions is clear (e.g., officer evaluations), others (e.g., professional development) seem to be diffuse; moreover, the interrelatedness of the entities is not clear as it pertains to the authority and responsibility for delivering training and education to the officer corps. Organizational changes implemented in recent history such as the creation of the Leadership and Development Center in 1998 and the creation of a Training and Education Branch (FC-51) in 2008 have increased the number of entities involved in the development and delivery of training and PME.

In addition to internal management issues related to officer PME, there are several relevant issues from the external environment worth noting. First, as stated earlier, there is no external mandate, either from DHS or from Congress, requiring the Coast Guard to have a PME program, except to meet DOD requirements for prerequisites for JPME 2 courses. There is an

⁶³ HS-PROFET, 4.

⁶⁴ The Office of Leadership and Professional Development (CG-133), which is responsible for policy oversight, works for the Human Resources Directorate (CG-1) as does the separate Coast Guard Personnel Service Center (PSC). The Officer Personnel Management Branch of PSC is responsible for officer evaluations, assignments, and career counseling. The Leadership Development Center (LDC) located at the Coast Guard Academy in New London was established in 1998 to consolidate certain accession and indoctrination courses and to serve as a center of excellence for leadership development for the entire force. The Office of Strategic Analysis (CG-0951) is the program manager for senior service schools and monitors and analyzes issues with strategic implications for the service, including training and education. The Training and Education Branch (FC-51) of Force Readiness Command oversees voluntary education, general mandated training, professional development, and the advanced education program among other responsibilities. The internal relationships of the various entities was gleaned from multiple sources. U.S. Coast Guard, “Human Resources (CG-1),” www.uscg.mil/hr/careerlinks.asp (accessed January 15, 2011). U.S. Coast Guard, “Leadership Development Center,” www.cga.edu/LDC_home (accessed January 15, 2011). U.S. Coast Guard, “Training and Education Branch of Force Readiness Command,” <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/cg132/fc14.asp> (accessed January 15, 2011); and, Charlotte Pittman, CG-133, email to author, January 25, 2011.

acknowledged need from DHS for some type of PME for the department, but efforts thus far to institutionalize a curriculum and process for implementation are theoretical.⁶⁵ Many private and some public entities such as the Naval Post-Graduate School have begun to offer Homeland Security degrees and certificates but they are not tied to DHS or to Coast Guard core leadership competencies.

Second, Congressional oversight of the Coast Guard is much more complex than most other agencies and all of the other military services due to its large number of missions and the diverse number of committees and subcommittees in Congress that focus on Homeland Security issues. Since 2005, the Coast Guard has had to testify before thirty-three committees or subcommittees, ten of which were focused on Homeland Security, an average of thirty-three times on a vast number of security, commerce, and other mission-related topics.⁶⁶ Because of this diffuse, topical oversight, there is no single advocate for the Coast Guard to garner the funding and support needed for an institutional approach to PME. The exclusion of the Coast Guard from the DOD JPME requirements by the House Armed Services Committee leaves the Coast Guard out of an established institutional structure and process that would ensure PME for its officer corps.

This concludes discussion of the history and culture of the officer corps, the current state of PME, the current state of Coast Guard education policies and guidance, the competency gaps identified by recent studies, and internal and external institutional issues involving PME. Before proceeding to discussing the problem or problems in more detail that were revealed through

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Directorate for Preparedness, Chief Learning Officer. *The Department of Homeland Security Professional Core Competencies*. Kim Corthell, Task Lead. White paper prepared by the Homeland Security Institute. (Washington, DC), 14.

⁶⁶ LCDR Rebecca Ore, e-mail message to author, January 30, 2011.

these narratives, it is necessary to try to define the desired end state. What does the Coast Guard want its officers to know and to be able to do? More importantly, what does the nation and the public require? The answers to these questions form the basis of the desired end state.

Defining the Desired End State

First, what does the Coast Guard want? Admiral Robert J. Papp, Commandant of the Coast Guard, clearly articulated his vision just after assuming command in May 2010: “I am committed to professional service by demonstrating the highest competence in execution and support of our varied missions. At all times we are a military organization...honoring our profession requires inspired leadership to develop knowledge, skills, pride, and experience, in a nurturing environment, built from a foundation of clear doctrine and training.”⁶⁷ Second, the Coast Guard’s *Evergreen II* strategy clearly articulates the vision of the service in building “The Best Team” with “The Right Skills,” two of thirteen overall strategic goals for the future of the service.⁶⁸ Third, as a military service, the DOD expects the Coast Guard to “maintain a state of readiness to function as a specialized military service in the Department of the Navy in time of war or national emergency” including “deployment as requested by military service component or joint commanders.”⁶⁹ And finally, as a law enforcement agency under DHS and as a partner in the broader interagency environment, Coast Guard officers should meet DHS core competencies.

⁶⁷ U.S. Coast Guard, “Shipmates 2: My Guiding Principles” (ALCOAST 271/10) http://www.uscg.mil/announcements/alcoast/271-10_alcoast.txt (accessed September 21, 2010).

⁶⁸ “The Best Team” future state is described as, “The Coast Guard consistently fields a team whose competencies match the current and future needs of the organization.” “The Right Skills” future state is described as, “Both required technical and specialty experts and strategic leaders are produced and valued. Personnel make career development choices that benefit both themselves and the organization. The service demonstrates commitment to professional education and development.” U.S. Coast Guard, “Evergreen II Project Report” August 2009. <http://www.uscg.mil/strategy/docs/evergreenreportfinal.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2010).

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, DOD Directive Number 5100.01. 21 December 2010. (Washington, DC), 32-33.

What began as an inquiry to fill the six gaps identified in the Coast Guard’s twenty-eight leadership competencies has revealed a broader set of DOD and DHS knowledge requirements that the Coast Guard officer corps is currently not meeting as well. Thus, at a minimum all Coast Guard officers should meet service, joint military and DHS/Interagency milestones and competencies to be prepared to function in complex, dynamic and multi-faceted environments at all levels. Table 2, below, outlines the desired service, military, and departmental core competencies for Coast Guard officers by educational level. These competencies, at a minimum will prepare Coast Guard officers to perform the missions, functions, and roles the nation and the public expect. The next section of the paper defines and discusses the problems with the current state of the situation based on the premise that Coast Guard leadership agrees with the desired-state defined here.

	Coast Guard Competencies – Desired State		
Level	Service	Military	DHS/Interagency
Precommissioning			
Primary (O1-O2)	28 Leadership Competencies & Specialty Training	Specialty Training	Tier 1
Intermediate (O3-O4)		JPME 1	Tier 2
Senior (O5-O6)		JPME 2	Tier 3
Flag/SES		Capstone	Pinnacle

Table 2: Desired Competencies for Coast Guard Officers

We often fail not because we fail to solve the problem we face, but we fail to solve the right problem.
--Jamshid Gharajedaghi

Problem Analysis

Once the context of an issue or system is understood and the desired-state is defined, the problem or problems of the current system can be identified. Constant and deliberate inquiry and reflection can help identify the challenges and obstacles which may underlie or hinder improvements to the existing situation and point to “areas for action that will transform existing conditions towards the desired end state.”⁷⁰ This process is often referred to as “formulating the mess” and relies on iterative searching to identify “the obstructions that prevent a system from facing its current reality.”⁷¹ It is not necessarily a simple process, but there are multiple established methods to use to examine all the inter-related aspects of an issue. This paper will rely primarily on *Systems and Obstruction Analysis* as described in Jamshid Gharajedaghi’s book *Systems Thinking*.⁷²

Systems Analysis

Author Jamshid Gharajedaghi defines *Systems Analysis* as a process that examines the inter-relatedness of issues that make up a complex problem and describes them in terms of “their

⁷⁰ FM 5-0, 3-10.

⁷¹ Author Jamshid Gharajedaghi explains the purpose of defining the problem in concert with the environmental narrative, “The mess is formulated to achieve the following aims: provide a perspective that sets the relevant host of problems in the proper context; develop a shared understanding of why the system behaves the way it does; minimize the resistance to change and maximize the courage to act by making the real enemy explicitly visible and believable; and, identify areas of greatest leverage, vulnerability, and/or possible seeds of the system’s destruction.” Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking, Managing Chaos and Complexity: A Platform of Designing Business architecture*. 2nd Ed. (Burlington, Massachusetts: Elsevier, Inc., 2006), 132-133.

⁷² These techniques are general guides and are not prescriptive in process or form. They are used during the “search process” to “generate enough information...[to] establish the relevancy of each variable under consideration.” Gharajedaghi, 132 & 133.

structural, functional, and behavioral aspects without making a value judgment.”⁷³ This section of the paper will use information from the narrative of the previous section and examine it in terms of *Structure*, *Function*, and *Process* as each relates to the current state of PME in the Coast Guard.⁷⁴ The *Structure* of the system to deliver PME to Coast Guard officers is comprised of multiple actors, entities, and organizations with varying degrees of interest and influence. Internal entities are comprised of individuals and groups within the Coast Guard that have a stake in officer PME. Coast Guard senior leaders have articulated high interest in improving PME, and they have the most direct power to influence change. There are multiple program stakeholders who have invested a significant amount of time and energy into studying and producing reports on the competency and education issues. Interest in and influence on improving the current system appears high but program responsibility is very diffuse and disjointed. The officer corps itself continues to face increasing technical, operational, and strategic knowledge requirements within a self-directed, and time-constrained learning environment. Individual officers are generally not aware of other service PME systems at the lower ranks and do not have much influence in advocating for changing the current experiential system. Officers are trained based on specialty and/or subspecialty and do not have a common experiential or educational program at any level, except all flag officers attend the DOD-sponsored Capstone Course.

⁷³ Gharajedaghi, 132.

⁷⁴ *Structure* is focused on the input. In general, review of the system’s structure includes such things as who the actors are, what their interests are, what their influence is and how they are organized. *Function* is focused on the output. In general, this includes what is being produced, for whom, and why? This can also include examination of the implicit, explicit, and latent requirements. *Process* is focused on knowledge. Or, how we do what we do. Gharajedaghi, 134.

External entities such as DHS, Congress, and the public also play a key role in the current system. DHS has high interest in developing a PME system and departmental competencies, but it has not mandated the Coast Guard or its agencies to implement a PME program. DOD has an enabling interest but low influence on Coast Guard PME. Congress seems to be uninterested in ensuring the Coast Guard meets service or Joint PME requirements despite being potentially very influential. Lack of interest in this issue may be because Congressional oversight of the Coast Guard tends to be mission focused rather than service focused. The public has very high expectations for Coast Guard mission performance but almost no influence on ensuring its education requirements are met. The actors and entities that comprise the PME system are varied by type and influence level. The next aspect to examine in the system is the *function* of the entities in producing the desired end state.

The *Function* of the system is failing to meet all twenty-eight leadership competencies and the experiential preference for every junior officer to serve at sea for one tour is not being met. The competency gaps identified in the MOLGA studies remain and competency gaps in technical specialties and subspecialties are unknown because they are not measured. There is no method to ensure the proposed DHS competencies are taught to officers. DOD and Joint PME opportunities are not required and billets are extremely limited. There is no service-specific PME program for Coast Guard officers. Output of the current system is compounded by increasing knowledge requirements, increasing complexity of tasks, technology, and an operational tempo that potentially inhibits self-directed or experiential learning. The *function* of the system is inter-related and dependent on the system *process* or processes.

The *Process* of the current system relies on a leadership framework, short-duration training courses, workshops and seminars, and program-specific higher education opportunities.

The learning environment is highly dependent on units and individuals, and the capability, competency, and capacity of more senior officers to mentor and train more junior officers may not be consistent. Lack of consistent mentoring and leadership can be caused by several factors including the lack of time, lack of experience mentoring, or lack of knowledge about leadership techniques, or lack of leadership experience. The direct and opportunity costs of the current experiential system are well accepted and inexpensive. Direct and opportunity costs for improving PME are undetermined but cannot be discounted as a potential barrier to implementing change. This concludes a brief iteration of the current state as it relates to the *structure, function, and process* of the system. Next is a brief *Obstruction Analysis* to help identify the potential barriers to implementing change based on the *Systems Analysis*, background information, and recent study findings.

Obstruction Analysis

Obstruction Analysis' purpose is to identify the malfunctioning in the knowledge, power, wealth, beauty, and value dimensions of a social system"⁷⁵ The Coast Guard is a social system that works within several other social systems that impact its behavior and outcomes in producing capable, educated, and mission-ready officers. Each dimension is discussed as it pertains to known or potential obstructions. The purpose here is not to review every restraining force or obstruction identified in a previous study but to holistically review each dimension as it relates to the current state and the actual outcomes of the studies. Table 3, below, delineates Jamsid Gharejedaghi's model of *Obstruction Analysis* that forms the basis of discussion.

⁷⁵ Gharajedaghi, 132.

	Function	Structure	Process
Power	Potency of the output in meeting explicit, implicit, and latent requirements	Source of power; Authority & responsibility; organizational linkages	Decision process Discrepancies in existing policies & procedures
Knowledge	Explicitness of the assumptions about the working paradigm	Measurement system; Compatibility of performance criteria, measures, and rewards	Learning & control; Early-warning system; Feedback Loop
Wealth	Viability of market niche; Reliability of demand	Source of money; Relationships within the value chain	Operational viability; Demand for output rationalized
Beauty	Vision of a desired future	Alienation, insecurities, boredom	Integration & differentiation
Values	Risk & vulnerability	Default values of culture	Conflict management

Table 3: Jamshid Gharajedaghi's Obstruction Analysis Model⁷⁶

Knowledge

Knowledge is the dimension of a social system that consists of “the generation and dissemination of truth, information and understanding.”⁷⁷ Information and knowledge about the current experiential model of officer development is well articulated in existing instructions and guidebooks; weakness in this dimension is in understanding that the experiential model is not sufficient to close the current gaps in the twenty-eight leadership competencies which prevents the development of alternatives that would be more effective in the dissemination of information in the form of education. Another weakness in this area is the service focuses almost exclusively on the twenty-eight leadership competencies as a performance standard, but these are not the only knowledge or attitudinal attributes required to be a successful military and interagency leader. Knowledge requirements have increased over time, but the Coast Guard's training and

⁷⁶ Gharajedaghi, 134.

⁷⁷ Gharajedaghi, 56.

education system have not kept pace with the content or complexity of information required. Knowledge and attitudinal requirements need to be redefined and made explicit to include service, DOD, and departmental competencies. Once the requirements are defined, measures can be put in place to assess and monitor how the knowledge requirements are delivered and adjusted to meet program criteria.

Current career development information and policy lacks detail and specificity making it difficult for officers to assess or benchmark their performance on a norm. Furthermore, officer performance is not directly related to the twenty-eight leadership competencies or a leadership continuum that would provide a basis for feedback, measurement, and accountability at the individual level.⁷⁸ On a broader programmatic level, systemic measurement of how well the Coast Guard's training and education system delivers required information and knowledge to an established standard does not really exist except for tracking completion of general mandated training. Without some form of performance criteria or measurement system, individual and program feedback mechanisms are difficult to establish in order to make adjustments in system delivery and performance. This concludes the discussion on the perceived *Knowledge* obstructions for improving officer PME. The next dimension discussed is *Power*.

Power

Power is the dimension of a social system that consists of "legitimacy, authority, and responsibility or, in general, the notion of governance."⁷⁹ The *Power* dimension points to several obstructions in improving PME for the officer corps. First, there is no direct mandate from a higher authority, either departmental or Congressional, for formal education in the Coast Guard.

⁷⁸ JONA, 2-3 and MOLA 2, 13.

⁷⁹ Gharajedaghi, 56.

This leaves the Coast Guard without an advocate, an oversight structure and process, or guaranteed access to resources to deviate from a low cost experiential PME model. It is forced to rely on other services, agencies, and government institutions for access to programs that meet the non-technical leadership competency gaps. The Coast Guard pursues these opportunities as resources allow. In brief, the Coast Guard has no champion or advocate to help it develop a system that meets the explicit, implicit, and latent requirements despite the service's desire to lead DHS in this area.

Second, Coast Guard leadership has sponsored and chartered multiple studies on the issue of PME the past ten years which indicates awareness of the systemic problems, but it has not implemented many of the recommendations from the studies. Those that were implemented have not closed the mid-grade level competency gaps. Emphasis remains on the individual and unit-level to learn higher-order, complicated, and strategic-level knowledge and competencies. While senior leaders have been engaged, improving officer PME does not appear to be a top priority. This comment is not meant to be judgmental but an indicator that the Coast Guard may have too many competing operational priorities and not enough resources to invest in its force development. Despite considerable effort, interest, and concern, it does not appear that Coast Guard leadership has been decisive in exerting its power to effect improvement in officer PME either directly or by holding program managers responsible for implementing recommended improvements.⁸⁰⁸¹

⁸⁰ Despite having Chief of Staff (CG-01) approval on four of five "immediate opportunities" for improvement from the HS-PROFET study in early 2007, they remain largely unimplemented. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. U.S. Coast Guard, *Decision Memo on HS-PROFET – The Way Ahead* dated 23 April 2007.

⁸¹ Long-term and/or resource intense improvements that would close the competency gaps including developing a professional development continuum, providing a "staff 101" course for mid-grade officers, and

In addition to decision authority, the *Power* dimension includes organizational linkages and discrepancies in policy. Here again, there are obstructions to system improvement. Responsibility for officer PME is “spread over many staffs with no overarching theoretical or objective framework” and these entities often “compete internally for authority, responsibility and funding. The result is no accountability for efforts, no long-term program plan, and the diffusion of talent and resources.”⁸² The relationships among the current entities that have partial responsibility for officer professional development are so convoluted that it is literally impossible to draw an organizational chart that shows the functionality of the system.⁸³ One of the approved recommendations from the HS-PROFET Study proposed realignment of the entities into a combined CG5/7 element which could have potentially improved the internal authority, responsibility and organizational structure for PME. While a CG5 and CG7 were created for operational reasons, these entities were never given oversight of PME.⁸⁴ Thus, PME program entities are somewhat functionally linked but are not controlled by a single program coordinator. The lack of organizational unity impacts policies and procedures as well as program delivery. Policy for officer development is not distinct nor is it clearly delineated in a single document; there is no development continuum for the thirteen officer specialties. There is no

developing a Coast Guard Command & General Staff college were either not approved or not acted on. HS-PROFET, 10, 12, 13, 16.

⁸² HS-PROFET, 4.

⁸³ Training (FC-51) and Leadership and Professional Development (CG-133) are managed by two separate entities and the Leadership Development Center works for a third. Officer personnel evaluation and career advising is conducted by a fourth entity, the Personnel Service Center, and there are more than thirty individual program offices within the organization that have oversight of graduate school billets. The author attempted to diagram the relationships based on information obtained from entity websites and from an email describing the current functions and relationships from LCDR Charlotte Pittman, CG-133, e-mail message to author on specific organizational questions, January 29, 2011.

⁸⁴ U.S. Coast Guard, *Decision Memo on HS-PROFET – The Way Ahead* dated 23 April 2007, 1-2. The realignment decision was verified with Dr. Steve Wehrenberg in an interview with the author on January 31, 2011.

continuum that delineates at what point or rank each of the twenty-eight leadership competencies become relevant for performance. There is no continuum that incorporates service, DOD, and departmental competencies or career milestones comprehensively. Perhaps more than any other dimension, *Power* contains significant obstacles to PME program improvement. Without fundamental changes to program vision, decision-making, and organizational structures with program oversight, progress towards improvement remains unlikely. This concludes a broad discussion on the perceived *Power* obstructions for improving officer PME. The next dimension discussed is *Wealth*.

Wealth

Wealth is the dimension of a social system that generates, distributes, or produces “necessary goods and services.”⁸⁵ For the purposes of this analysis and paper, time, people and money (cost) are included in the discussion of this dimension. The importance of wealth cannot be overstated, especially as it relates to trying to make systemic changes within a high-demand, multi-mission, resource constrained organization. Lack of time due to high operational tempo was identified as the second most influential barrier to obtaining competencies in the twenty-eight leadership categories by mid-grade officers in the MOLGA 1 study.⁸⁶ Since 9-11, the demands on individuals, units, staffs, and the service have continued to increase. A lagging indicator of how busy and over worked the Coast Guard is that it has had to increase the maximum number of leave days an individual can accrue from 60, to 75, to 90, to unlimited since 2005. Recommending or mandating unit-level solutions to PME, such as the *Unit Leadership Development Program* are not effective, not because they are not valued or thought

⁸⁵ Gharajedaghi, 56.

⁸⁶ MOLGA 1, 13.

important, but because there is not enough time to do them. Implementing recommendations that require individuals and units to dedicate more time to professional development or education are problematic unless there is a reduction in mission demand or an increase in personnel.

Reducing mission demand involves political and cultural issues that could be problematic for the service as well as stakeholders. Increasing people may be easier politically than reducing demand, but it is also a challenging proposition during the current fiscal climate. Military services, including the Coast Guard, typically have “general detail” billets built into their force structure. General detail typically includes personnel who are assigned to full-time education, are not assignable due to medical conditions, or are in transit from one location or assignment to another. The Navy and Army’s general detail usually account for approximately thirty percent of the force.⁸⁷ Most, if not all, of the Coast Guard’s general detail has been consumed by programming people to specific billets due to increasing demand on the service. The net effect of this is that units are gapped personnel during transfer season and there are no extra billets to assign personnel to if increased educational opportunities are created. The time-people conundrum is perhaps the most pivotal obstruction to implementing change to the PME system and it is directly related to cost.

None of the Coast Guard studies reviewed mention cost of implementing the recommendations, and financial analysis of alternatives is beyond the scope of this paper; however, this is a substantial data point that needs to be addressed for potential solutions. It appears that recommended alternatives to closing the current competency gaps may have emphasized the least costly options in terms of direct or opportunity costs and re-emphasized the

⁸⁷ This number is based on research conducted by the author on service staffing standards in 2006 while working with the Navy to establish several new Coast Guard units that were funded by the Navy.

experiential model of learning. Cost, direct or indirect, remains a significant obstruction to officer PME improvement. This concludes a brief discussion on the perceived *Wealth* obstructions for improving officer PME. The remaining two dimensions, *Beauty* and *Values*, are discussed jointly.

Beauty and Values

Beauty is the dimension of a social system that expresses “the emotional aspect of being, [or] the meaningfulness and excitement of what is done in and of itself,” and “*Values* are the dimension of a social system that underlie how it forms and relates to itself and others.”⁸⁸ These two dimensions are much more subjective than *Knowledge*, *Power*, and *Wealth* but are important in discerning why an organization acts or fails to act. They form the core of an organization’s culture and tend to change very slowly, if at all, over time. They also impact the way the organization relates to itself internally and to external entities.

The narrative at the beginning of this paper that briefly describes Coast Guard history and the culture of the officer corps was to show that the Coast Guard has changed over time, but its articulated identity as a “seagoing” service has not changed quickly enough to keep pace with its increasingly broad range of sea and shored-based missions. Being a seagoing service is the Coast Guard’s heritage and legacy, but it is no longer its only identity or purpose. The lag in acknowledging the changing nature of the service has implications for service unity as well as for the service’s model of training and educating the force. The experiential model of learning fit the organization’s culture and missions early in its development; however, as the number and complexity of its missions increased since the early 1970s, subcultures and specialized

⁸⁸ Gharajedaghi, 56.

communities began to form within the service that competed for resources and relevance in an organization that prided itself as “seagoing.” Adhering to a rigid, partially correct identity kept the specialized communities, more or less, isolated and insular from each other until the Coast Guard changed its shored-based organizational structure to a Sector construct a few years ago. The Sector construct merged the “legacy Groups and Marine Safety Offices” together combining all missions with distinctly different functions and missions into one entity.⁸⁹ Suddenly, people from disparate communities were required to work together performing more missions simultaneously. The organizational change resulted in a “culture clash” that impacted operations and the force.⁹⁰ Officers and enlisted members were required to have knowledge and understanding of a broad set of missions, authorities, and policies that were addressed only at the command and departmental head level with “just-in-time” two-week training courses. Junior and mid-grade officer training remained and still remains focused on specific functions or tasks. The training and education system did not adjust to the new organizational construct by providing education that combined mission requirements, addressed their complexity or context within a new department, or addressed their operational and strategic requirements. All of which, if addressed in an educational learning environment may have ameliorated the culture clash and helped lay the groundwork for a broader cultural construct for the service. Particularly telling is the final comment from the 2008 MOLGA 2 study:⁹¹

The leadership gaps identified in this report were echoed in the 1999 Junior Officer Needs Assessment and some of the recommendations, that were not implemented, are

⁸⁹ Jim Howe and Jim Dolbow, “Heavy Weather Ahead for the Coast Guard,” *Proceedings* Vol. 135, no. 8 (August 2009), <http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2009-08/heavy-weather-ahead-Coast-Guard> (accessed December 23, 2010), 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ MOLGA 2, 15.

very similar to the ones found in this report. The findings in this report indicate an ongoing systemic problem that requires change to the organizational culture...[the Coast Guard needs] to work together to develop a leadership continuum that combines the current initiatives and implements training beyond the current experiential model.

In addition to internal cultural issues which obstruct change, the Coast Guard faces significant challenges externally because of its culture and values. The Coast Guard has always prided itself on doing more with less and taking on more and more missions over time. It is a “can do” organization that is full of self-motivated, self-reliant, dedicated individuals who are used to learning by doing.⁹² While this positive attitude and the force’s self-determined attributes are valued by the public it serves, they also put the service at a disadvantage when it comes to garnering the resources it needs to complete all of its missions and take care of the force. As one author notes, “Coast Guard culture plays a role in the service’s lack of political finesse” especially when it comes to publicizing what it does. It is just not used to “tooting its own horn.” In fact, “they’re like the silent service; they don’t talk about what they do.”⁹³ Despite a “twenty percent growth in personnel since 9-11” and a significant increase into its Deepwater recapitalization effort, the Coast Guard remains at risk fiscally due to years of austere budgets while part of the Department of Transportation.⁹⁴ The Coast Guard will have to ask for additional resources for training and education in order to meet the increasing knowledge requirements of a post 9-11 world in addition to addressing other barriers and obstructions.

In summary, reflection on the *Knowledge, Power, Wealth, Beauty* and *Values* dimensions of this issue point to multiple obstructions and barriers to change. It is apparent that the competency gaps identified in the studies exist for many reasons and fixing the problem is not as

⁹² Laurent, 1.

⁹³ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁴ Jim Howe and Jim Dolbow, 2.

simple as it might appear. It is also evident that the gaps in the twenty-eight leadership competencies are not the only area that needs improvement to get to a desired or ideal state of officer PME. What is apparent is that the competency gaps are due to a system of issues and obstructions that are interrelated and dependent on each other. Fixing one will not necessarily result in change or systemic improvement. All dimensions and obstructions must be addressed in coordination with each other. This does not mean drastic change has to occur rapidly, but understanding and working on all facets of the problem simultaneously and incrementally are more likely to result in lasting program improvement. Recommendations for PME program improvement based on five broad categories discerned from the *Systems* and *Obstruction* analyses immediately follow the conclusion. The five categories are knowledge, advocacy, plans and policy, resources, and culture.

Professional attainment, based upon prolonged study, and collective study at colleges, rank by rank, age by age – those are the title reeds of the commanders of future armies, and the secret of future victories. --Winston Churchill, 1946

Conclusion

This monograph is not just about officer competency gaps. It is also about the environment and the system that keeps change from being implemented. One would think that closing six leadership competency gaps at the mid-grade level is a fairly straightforward proposition. But after ten years of study and some minor adjustments, the core competency gaps remain, and other knowledge requirements have been added or have become more relevant for Coast Guard officers. The reasons for the current state are many – culture, history, advocacy, resources, will, planning, and policy. All are interrelated. It is hoped that the discussion and analysis in this paper provides a better understanding of the issues, their underlying causes, and a new perspective on program improvement. It is not a foregone conclusion that there will be

consensus on the officer PME issue, and as leadership author Heifitz notes, “in a complex social system, a problem will lack clarity because a multitude of factions will have divergent opinions about both the nature of the problem and its possible solutions.”⁹⁵ There is no single, quick or easy solution for achieving the desired state, but progress can be made by approaching all issues and obstacles deliberately and simultaneously to ensure Coast Guard officers improve their knowledge and competency base as maritime professionals. Changing from an experiential model of learning to an objective-based educational one requires proactive and adaptive leadership as well as vision – a vision that the Coast Guard’s Founding Father, Alexander Hamilton, had more than two hundred years ago. In fact, it is somewhat ironic that he was a staunch advocate of a professional, educated military.⁹⁶ By 1799, Hamilton “alone...anticipated important elements of military professionalism...and, he urged the creation of an elaborate military university to school officers in the principles of war, the exercises it requires, and the sciences upon which they are founded.”⁹⁷

Hamilton’s vision went unrealized because during the nation’s formative years the American people distrusted standing armies. No substantial force was kept in existence after the Revolutionary War, so there was no compelling practical or an institutional need for PME. While Hamilton’s vision of a preeminent military and a military education system was largely an idea before its time, it has evolved and become the foundation of American military success. In general, the DOD PME system is credited with educating officers to plan and lead complex,

⁹⁵ Ronald Heifitz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 86.

⁹⁶ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 194.

⁹⁷ Huntington, 195.

combined arms warfare at the operational and strategic levels. The system is also directly responsible for enabling American military successes from World War I to the present.

While it is unfortunate that the Coast Guard has not been the benefactor of Hamilton's vision like DOD has, there is still time to make improvements to ensure the Coast Guard remains *America's Maritime Guardian*. The Coast Guard has evolved from a small seagoing service as the Revenue Marine to a small world-class military service with eleven large and very complex missions. The nation continues to expect the Coast Guard to do all of its missions with excellence and to lead larger and more complex contingency operations. Yet, the service continues to ask more and more from its officers without an investment to ensure they have the leadership, joint, and interagency competencies they need to lead and succeed in the twenty-first century. Before 9-11, there was already a need to educate junior officers. Since then, the gaps in core competencies have widened substantially, making the urgency to address the shortfalls even more compelling. The Coast Guard will always have more tasks and missions than it has resources to do. Its sister services, especially the Army and Marine Corps, also have more than they can do as they continue to fight and resolve two separate active conflicts, but they still take the time and dedicate the resources to educating their officers. So should the Coast Guard.

The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.
--Thucydides

Recommendations

Viable solutions are inextricably linked to each other and to the institutional and attitudinal barriers and obstacles that exist in the system trying to change. The recommended solutions posed in this monograph represent any number of good alternatives to improving officer professional development, but they are not the only alternatives. Some echo previous findings. Some are new alternatives or options.

Knowledge Gaps

First and foremost, the attitudinal gaps identified in the JONA study and the core competency gaps identified in the MOLGA studies need to be addressed head-on or the Coast Guard will continue to have officers without the requisite leadership skills and competencies in key areas. It is evident from reviewing the recent studies that the experiential model is no longer a viable method for ensuring consistent delivery of or exposure to situations that would develop all of the required leadership competencies in junior and mid-grade officers; therefore, the Coast Guard should acknowledge this and develop alternatives that do not rely on individual or unit-level implementation.

The Coast Guard should develop a primary-level course for O-2s and junior O-3s that deliberately introduces the twenty-eight leadership competencies as recommended by the MOLGA 2 study and require all officers to attend.⁹⁸ This would be in addition to any technical competency training a junior officer receives. This course should also introduce junior officers to

⁹⁸ MOLGA 2, 11.

DOD concepts, joint doctrine, and tiered DHS knowledge, skills, and abilities. Combining the service, DOD, and DHS requirements in one course at the primary level should ensure all officers have a consistent, requirements-based, knowledge foundation for further development in keeping with the service's strategic goals. The course should be based on cognitive and affective objectives and be academically rigorous; it should require out of class readings and assignments, written analyses, verbal briefings, and both individual and collaborative staff assignments. All of the DOD services have similar courses for their junior officers and examining these could help define a Coast Guard version. Each service has its own approach based on service and competency needs and the Coast Guard needs its own primary-level PME course for officers.

An on-line version of the primary course is also an option; however, this would not provide officers with the interaction of peers and professors that facilitates learning in a resident class setting, nor would it help to unify the service culture. Additionally, this puts extra burden on the individual to complete the course when not enough time and high operational tempo are already significant impediments to learning outside the work environment.⁹⁹ An on-line version would be a good complement to a resident course but should not be the primary method of delivery.

The next step the Coast Guard needs to take is to determine its intermediate-level educational goals for meeting the "desired state" requirements delineated in Table 2. The requirements will largely be determined when the twenty-eight leadership competencies and the DOD and DHS requirements are delineated on an officer development continuum. However, the Coast Guard needs to define its service requirements for the intermediate level and determine to

⁹⁹ MOLGA 1, 13.

what extent it wants the officer corps to comply with JPME Phase 1 and all DHS tiered competencies. Ideally, every mid-grade officer would meet all requirements, but since the Coast Guard has both DOD and DHS competencies to meet, this may be too onerous to implement in the short-term, especially because there is no specific course that currently exists for the DHS tiered competencies. The long-term goal should be for all officers to meet the “desired state” at each level of his or her career. As the HS-PROFET work group noted in their report, “The Coast Guard could and should lead the way for DHS in developing the core curriculum that would meet this requirement with direct benefit to the service, DHS, and the interagency community.”¹⁰⁰

In the short-term, there are alternatives that the Coast Guard can pursue to help mid-grade officers. First, the Coast Guard should pursue additional billets at all of the intermediate level DOD PME institutions. These programs meet, by objective, four of the six gapped competencies and six of seven of the competencies identified by senior leadership as vital to leading a major incident; they also meet and reinforce several competencies that are not currently gapped.¹⁰¹ These programs all meet JPME Phase 1 requirements and focus on joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations. The seven current billets to these institutions should be substantially increased immediately (tenfold would be a good start) and expanded for several years in the future. This would be 70 of 1365 O-4s, half of one percent of that grade. In comparison, the Army currently educates one hundred percent of its O-4s at the intermediate

¹⁰⁰ The 2006 HS-PROFET study sets the foundation for the Coast Guard to do this. Many of the study’s recommendations remain viable alternatives for all levels of education, accession through flag/SES level and senior enlisted. HS-PROFET, 8-11.

¹⁰¹ Gapped competencies met include strategic thinking, political savvy, external, awareness, and vision development; major incident leadership competencies met include effective communications, team building, influencing others, decision making & problem solving, creativity & innovation, and partnering; other leadership competencies met include accountability & responsibility, personal conduct, and management & process improvement. OPMEP, Appendix C to Enclosure E, Service (Intermediate Level College Joint Learning Areas and Objectives).

level and the Navy currently educates approximately thirty percent of its O-4s in resident programs and a much higher percentage overall via its distance programs.¹⁰²

The Coast Guard should engage the Army Command & General Staff College immediately and establish an instructor/liaison billet similar to the Naval War College and increase its students to equal the Navy's presence of fifty-eight. Besides the Navy, the Coast Guard is most likely to work with the Army on any number of domestic consequence management scenarios, as it did during Hurricanes Katrina and Ike and with National Guard troops during the Deepwater Horizon response. Establishing a Coast Guard element at Fort Leavenworth and increasing the number of Coast Guard students would help build relationships that are fundamental to domestic preparedness and response as well as broaden the Army's understanding of the Coast Guard as a seagoing service and a law enforcement entity. The Army needs more naval students to meet its required joint seminar composition and has recently developed and launched multiple interagency initiatives that would be mutually beneficial to both services. More importantly, the Coast Guard could learn a significant amount about PME program development and management by building a more permanent relationship with the Army and by having more students attend their schools; their PME program is the oldest of the services, is well institutionalized, and is admired by other DOD and international services.

In addition to increasing resident opportunities, the Coast Guard needs to offer time and financial incentives to officers to participate in the Naval Fleet Seminar program, or other services' equivalents, which award JPME Phase 1 in the geographical areas where it is offered.

¹⁰² The Navy educates a higher overall percentage of its O4s at the intermediate level (JPME 1), but relies heavily on distance education to do so. The Navy requires completion of JPME 1 for command screening at the O5 level. Captain David Murray, Navy Element and Commandant's Chair of Naval Studies at U.S. Army Command & General Staff College, e-mail message to the author on March 29, 2011.

Additionally, the Coast Guard needs to offer a financial incentive to officers who are not afforded the opportunity to attend a resident course to complete the on-line JPME Phase 1 courses offered by the Air Force and Navy on their own time. Alternatively, the Coast Guard could and should authorize personnel time off to complete the on-line courses. This would have to be done so it does not impact operations or detrimentally affect individuals or units.

In addition to DOD PME opportunities, the Coast Guard needs to advocate for billets for officers to attend select programs such as the Naval Postgraduate School's Homeland Security Program that is part resident and part distance-based and other fulltime resident opportunities that focus on DHS competencies. The Coast Guard needs to review and promulgate a list of approved Homeland Security degree and certificate programs that meet the intent of DHS tiered competencies for officers to pursue on their own time. Individuals should be compensated with time and a financial stipend to complete non-resident DHS programs. Completion of JPME 1 or an approved Homeland Security degree or certificate program should be required for every mid-grade officer within the next six to ten years while longer-term resident solutions are sought for meeting both military and interagency competencies. This requirement should be incorporated into the personnel evaluation and promotion system to ensure accountability.¹⁰³

Simultaneously, the Coast Guard needs to work on long term solutions for every educational level: accession, primary, intermediate, senior, and flag/SES with initial emphasis on the primary and intermediate levels since this is where the known gaps exist. The opportunities for long-term improvements are theoretically unbounded and a few alternatives are presented here for consideration. The Coast Guard could and probably should create its own Command and General

¹⁰³ JONA, 2-3 and MOLGA 2, 13.

Staff College that would educate the officer corps at the primary, intermediate and senior levels.¹⁰⁴ This could be done independently or in partnership with another DOD service, DHS agency, or a private institution. This also could be done in conjunction with the Coast Guard Academy since it is the only academic institution the Coast Guard has that is accredited. Regardless of how or where it is done, this is an opportunity for the Coast Guard to lead in defining its own unique system for educating its officers and sharing the experience with other services and agencies. It could enrich the DOD PME system and help DHS define its curriculum to meet its tiered competencies. It would eliminate Coast Guard competency gaps for the long term without relying on other institutions. If a Command and General Staff College is not a viable alternative, then the Coast Guard should seek to establish a significant permanent presence at the Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine Corps PME institutions at the intermediate and senior levels to increase student throughput and to integrate and stay connected to the DOD PME system. All of these institutions currently have U.S. government agency and international service personnel attend their courses.

Plans and Policy

Planning and policy improvements to officer PME are the foundation to lasting programmatic changes. The Directorate of Human Resources, CG-1, needs a strategic plan with milestones and measurements for improving officer PME that incorporates the findings of recent studies and includes service, DOD and DHS competency requirements. The requirements already exist in service, DOD, and DHS documents; the Coast Guard needs to collate these and use them as the basis for developing educational opportunities for its officers. Developing and

¹⁰⁴ This was one of the recommendations of the HS-PROFET Study. HS-PROFET, 16.

implementing a strategic plan for officer PME is in direct alignment with the Coast Guard's *Evergreen I* and *Evergreen II* force development goals for developing a "requirements-driven human resources system to ensure continuous alignment of competencies with organizational needs" and would be a good first step to closing the competency gaps in officers and improving and aligning competencies for the entire force in the long term.¹⁰⁵ The strategic plan should be broadly focused on the system of changes that need to be effected, such as the five solution categories proposed here; otherwise, progress may be difficult to track. Each category of solutions would have multiple objectives that move toward program improvements while ensuring linkages to other solution categories and/or objectives. In other words, the strategic plan must be systemically focused and not merely a list of individual recommendations.

The strategic plan also needs to clearly articulate roles and responsibilities for plan ownership, implementation, and systematic follow-up. The plan also needs to specify what the resource requirements are in terms of time, people, and money to implement for both program personnel and the officer corps and service as a whole. A comprehensive strategic plan has many practical benefits, but it also can and should be used to articulate the vision of the officer corps now and for the future; it can help redefine and reunify the officer corps culture into a more cohesive body. In addition to a developing an actionable, measurable plan for officer PME improvement, there are policy changes that would help guide the process and make officer professional development more distinguishable and definitive to all segments of the workforce.

¹⁰⁵ *Evergreen* is the Coast Guard's scenario-based, long-range strategic planning process. The Coast Guard has used scenario-based planning since 1998 for developing and executing mission strategies and resource programming. U.S. Coast Guard, *Evergreen II Project Report*, August 2009, under "Coast Guard Evergreen," <http://www.uscg.mil/strategy/docs/evergreenreportfinal.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2010): 1, 52-54.

Officer professional development and education policy is not well defined and distinct from service-wide policies. It would be beneficial to clearly articulate to the officer corps all training, education, and professional development expectations and requirements by separating officer policy from enlisted and civilian policy. The Coast Guard needs a document similar to the Army's *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management Manual* (DAPAM 600-3) which is superlative in its scope and depth in articulating officer development expectations and recommendations.¹⁰⁶ The Army manual includes detail for each officer specialty including a proposed continuum of education and development that serves as a career-long guide to officers of that specialty. While not prescriptive in the sense that it guarantees officers specific opportunities, it enables officers to understand the expected or ideal progression of his or her chosen profession. At a minimum, the Coast Guard should have a projected career progression chart for its thirteen officer specialties that includes service, DOD, and DHS requirements. It is also recommended that Coast Guard policy and career progression charts follow DOD delineations for educational levels so there is consistency across all of the services and a common lexicon for all. The proposed planning and policy changes are a significant undertaking that should ameliorate the lack of PME program clarity and move the service towards improving its PME goals and garnering the required resources for change.

Resources

None of the solutions is viable without additional resources, which is why determining the cost of each option is a prerequisite to success. The Coast Guard must build the “business

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of the Army. *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management, DAPAM 600-3*, 1 February 2010 (Washington, DC).

case” for each option considered – this will enable internal understanding of the costs and assist the service in garnering external support for the effort from the department and Congress. In the interim or while the business cases are being developed, the Coast Guard should show its earnestness in making substantive changes to officer professional development by reprogramming resources internally to begin making program improvements. While there are opportunity costs associated with reprogramming resources, this is an important first step in deciding to change from the current experiential model to one that meets the needs of the officer corps and service. Reprogramming internal resources also aligns the service’s strategic intent of fielding “the best team” with “the right skills” with its actions which indicates its dedication and renewed interest in the professionalism of the officer corps.¹⁰⁷ Once internal adjustments are made, it may be easier to convey the importance of the issue to external advocates for further buy-in and assistance with acquiring additional resources. Key to realizing progress, as noted in the HS-PROFET recommendations, is building an “organizational structure that allows an appropriate number of individuals to disengage from operations at the O3-O6” levels.¹⁰⁸ In other words, the Coast Guard needs to reinstate some acceptable percent of general detail billets in its force structure to allow officers time off to be educated.

During the last ten years, the Coast Guard has been more vocal about its resource needs but as one retired Captain notes, the resource picture of the Coast Guard is “still riddled with holes and in need of rescue by President Obama and the Congress.”¹⁰⁹ In order to change officer PME from an experiential model to an applicatory, educational one, Coast Guard leadership and

¹⁰⁷ *Evergreen*, 1, 52-54.

¹⁰⁸ HS-PROFET, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Jim Howe and Jim Dolbow, 2.

program managers have to present the business case, including direct, indirect, and opportunity costs for officer PME to garner the resources for long-term improvement. This may require openness to scrutiny from multiple external entities which is also counter-cultural. The Coast Guard needs to move beyond being the “silent service” and be the “Vocal Guard” if it hopes to change its PME system to one comparable to its sister services.¹¹⁰ Garnering the requisite resources involves adept and proactive engagement of advocates by appropriate entities.

Advocacy

Advocacy involves multiple internal and external organizational and behavioral recommendations. Internal advocacy involves decision making, realignment of priorities, and institutional change. First, a series of deliberate and informed decisions needs to be made by Coast Guard leadership. The first decision is to put people first. Historically, the Coast Guard is good at saying it values its people, but the officer professional development studies indicate that the Coast Guard is reluctant to dedicate the resources it needs to fix ongoing competency gaps. Few if any of the dozens of recommendations made from the studies were acted on; those that were implemented did not close the competency gaps identified or address existing DOD or emerging DHS requirements. The short-term result is competency gaps, but the long-term ramifications could be quite dire for the service. Attracting quality people and retaining them with a system that fails to give people the knowledge and experience they need to perform at an expected level cannot compete with other organizations and services that do. Besides finding the “will” to put people first, the second decision that senior leadership should make is to

¹¹⁰ Ibid. The authors are implying that the Coast Guard is the “silent service” because it does not brag about what it does nor does it have the same clout as DOD when it comes to garnering resources. Operationally, submariners are known as the “silent service.”

acknowledge that the current experiential model of training is no longer sufficient to prepare officers for the increasingly complex tasks they are required to perform. There should be an obligation by the service to meet the educational needs of its officers that complement ongoing individual and unit-level efforts. This is a significant attitudinal change which current policy does not support or articulate well. Policies need to reflect this decision and change in outlook. DOD service educational policies are significantly different than Coast Guard policy in this regard.

The third decision that senior leadership should make internal to the Coast Guard is an institutional change to give officer PME oversight to one entity. This was a recommendation of the HS-PROFET Study and remains a significant obstacle to implementing change.¹¹¹ One potential solution would be to create a Training and Doctrine Command similar to the U.S. Army's. This would centralize responsibility and unify efforts to train and educate the force under one entity without huge disruption to existing staffs. It would require additional organizational change at a time when the service is trying to steady itself from constant organizational shifts; however, without some realignment or reassignment of responsibility there is no internal champion for improving officer PME. In addition to internal decisions and realignments, the Coast Guard should seek outside advocacy for program changes. As one author notes, "being the 'Jack of All Trades' leaves the Coast Guard without a single, savvy, powerful advocate to fight for it with the executive branch and Congress."¹¹²

The Coast Guard needs to seek external advocates in three separate but equally important places simultaneously: Congress, DOD, and DHS. First, the Coast Guard needs a political

¹¹¹ HS-PROFET, 3-4.

¹¹² Laurent, 5.

champion to help it garner support and resources within Congress just as Representative Skelton was for several decades for DOD. Ideally, multiple entities on several committees such as the House Armed Services Committee or an appropriate Homeland Security Committee should be engaged. The Coast Guard is accountable to both military and agency committees within Congress, so it should seek support from both. The Coast Guard also needs to seek clarification on PME and JPME requirements from Congress. It is not entirely clear why the Coast Guard is not required to meet JPME requirements as an armed service. As previously mentioned, the lack of distinction between being a military service and an armed service under the law leaves the Coast Guard in a confusing position as it relates to DOD requirements for PME. Instead of trying to exclude itself from the existing system, the Coast Guard should advocate to Congress for inclusion in the law that requires military services to have service and joint PME under the cognizance of DOD. While this may bring the service more Congressional oversight, it will also give it the resources needed to implement a PME system.

Second, while seeking clarification from Congress, the Coast Guard should engage DOD directly on multiple levels. It should engage the Military Education Coordination Council at the Principals and Working Group levels for coordination of PME issues and visibility on DOD programs. Consistent engagement at these high levels would be one indicator of serious interest and intent to improve Coast Guard officer education and provide senior-leaders with a direct link to the DOD PME system.¹¹³ The Coast Guard should also engage the DOD PME institutions directly to increase the number of Coast Guard students at the intermediate level. The Coast

¹¹³ As stated in DOD's OPMEP, the MECC exists "to address key educational issues of interest to the joint education community, promote cooperation and collaboration among MECC member institutions, and coordinate joint education initiatives." OPMEP, C-1.

Guard should dedicate more billets at these institutions to serve as instructors, service liaisons and student coordinators similar to the staff at the Naval War College. This expands the Coast Guard's exposure as well as gives the Coast Guard the opportunity to learn about and contribute to the DOD PME system of schools while it seeks ways to meet its unique DHS competencies. A greater role within the DOD PME system may also provide opportunity to expand their curriculums to include some of the interagency competencies identified by DHS which would benefit all of the services.

Third, the Coast Guard needs to engage the Chief Learning Officer at DHS to begin addressing the competency needs of the service for working within the interagency. There are innumerable solutions to close the competency gaps within DHS and between DHS and DOD that would be cost-efficient and support the national goal of a "whole of government" approach to solving the nation's security goals. Ideally this would encompass a DOD-DHS-Academia partnership with existing institutions to create a curriculum that meets military and agency educational goals while minimizing the cost. A partnership would also benefit all parties as it would allow individual entities to retain their identities while sharing their capabilities and cultures in an environment that would facilitate understanding and foster novel and creative solutions to complex security problems.

Culture

Educating junior and mid-grade officers on all missions, the twenty-eight leadership competencies, DOD joint requirements, and DHS competencies has long term knowledge benefits as well as cultural ones. An important first step in the education process is for the Coast Guard to rearticulate its identity to its members and to the public because it must know what it is before it can train and educate to the identity. The Coast Guard is *America's Maritime Guardian*

– *from the Sea, from the Shore, and from the Air.*¹¹⁴ This vision captures the essence of what the service has done throughout history and what it does today. It is also an accurate and inclusive description of the members who contribute to the Coast Guard in all eleven missions and thirteen specialties. This vision and identity is not only focused on the sea, but the seaward approaches, the ports and waterways, and the mariners and public it protects. It aligns with recent initiatives such as the promulgation of the *Guardian Ethos*, the Commandant's *Guiding Principles*, and the most recent version of *Coast Guard Publication One*. It differentiates, yet integrates, all of the service's institutional subcultures, platforms and missions. The second step is to educate the force based on this identity. While education cannot wholly substitute for experience, it can move officers beyond individual and specialty experiences to a new and common standard of professional excellence for the entire officer corps - a standard that is needed now more than ever.

¹¹⁴ The term *America's Maritime Guardian* is articulated in *Coast Guard Publication One*, the foundational doctrinal document of the Coast Guard; however, there is no forum in which this vision or the document is taught or discussed by the officer corps. The author modified the vision to include *from the Sea, from the Shore, and from the Air* to be more inclusive of all the specialties and subspecialties that carry out the Coast Guard's missions.

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